

Presentation Made at the Central Association Meeting May 4, 2019

First Congregational Church of Pasadena was established in 1885, a year *before* Pasadena became a city. As the city changed and the church grew, FCC moved from its temporary home in the Chapel of Sierra Madre College to the corner of Pasadena Avenue and California Boulevard, close to the homes of many members; moved again in 1904 to Marengo and Green; and in 1927 to yet another building at Walnut and Los Robles in the heart of Pasadena. Through economic ups and downs, depressions and expansions; building renovations, repairs, maintenance, and debt were often an issue. But church has always been *much more* than the building we worshiped in.

At FCC Pasadena we have *always* been active in community outreach and advocacy for justice; finding *new* ways to address the issues of the day as the congregation changed and evolved; and initiating community-building actions and improvements in Pasadena over our 134-year history. For example:

In 1899 two women from our church started a literary society that acted on issues such as women's suffrage and civil rights; they founded *Rosemary Cottage*, which became *Rosemary Children's Services* for neglected children; they built the first public women's reading room and public rest room; and they established the *Pasadena Humane Society* (which originally supported children as well as its continuing shelter for animals).

FCC implemented one of the first city-youth programs in Pasadena – originally called the *Teen Post*, and later became the *Frederick Douglass Youth Center*.

We led the effort to develop the first senior citizens housing services program within Pasadena which ultimately supported the development of *Pilgrim Towers* senior housing.

FCC led the way for use of inclusive language and for recognition of the vital role of women within the local UCC Conference and national synod.

We were a Sanctuary Church for two immigrant families, supporting and housing them in our building over a two-year period.

FCC provided the first church housing for homeless families (called *The Depot*) for more than twenty years at the early development stages of the current *Union Station Homeless Services* program in Pasadena.

Our congregation established an educational and spiritual growth program for a member's daughter and many other developmentally disabled youth, which eventually resulted in them becoming church members. This program was among the first of its kind within the UCC.

FCC was at the forefront of peace activities within the UCC Conference, and beyond, throughout the many years of the Vietnam War.

We have proudly and respectfully declared ourselves to be an *Open and Affirming Church* for all marginalized persons for the past 25 years.

FCC Pasadena is now in its fifth home since incorporating in 1885. It still seems a bit strange to park and walk into the chapel at the First United Methodist Church on Colorado Boulevard, just a few blocks from our previous home. But it is a good move. We have brought with us the sense of welcome, justice, community, joy, and closeness in friendships, that I experienced in our old building to our new home. No longer are we shackled to an aging and somewhat crumbling edifice that no longer serves our needs or our mission. Our debts are paid off and we've invested our considerable surplus, setting aside funds for a possible new home (or support for rent) and another sizable fund for outreach and mission.

Before selling our building, we went through a two-year process to identify our core values of *Spiritual Growth, Welcome, and Justice Seeking* and to develop a mission and vision statement that includes taking action to help alleviate hunger and homelessness and to work with the educationally underserved and marginalized in the greater Pasadena area, as well as working on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised in the wider world; building dignity, promoting care for the environment, and advancing economic justice.

Since we moved, in February, to our latest home, we've committed to help support an immigrant family for a year, made it possible for a number of children to go to a Science Camp on Catalina Island with their classmates, and we significantly increased our OCWM contribution in support of the wider church mission. We have increased our Pasadena Area Women's Scholarship from \$1,500 given 3 years ago to \$12,000 for this year. (We're celebrating the recipients at a lovely afternoon tea May 11. If you'd like to come – let me know.) *And* we are exploring *additional* mission and outreach opportunities.

I look forward to participating in activities where we can make new connections and strengthen our community, to partner with organizations in Pasadena – building on existing programs, making them better and able to reach more people, living out our mission and vision as a congregation doing the work of the Church, looking to be faithful stewards of our resources responding to God's call.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Lanski

Many thanks to Ron White providing some historical information